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10

A Foreign Past

The Writing and Representation of History on a Royal Ancestral Shrine at Copan

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After four decades, Mayanists are now accustomed to the idea that ancient Maya artisans and scribes, when composing and carving monumental inscriptions, were principally concerned with the commemoration of historical events surrounding kings, their families, and their courts. Yet, despite our long acceptance of this historical paradigm in Maya research, it is surprising how little attention has been paid to ancient Maya concepts of history—one might call these “historical ideologies”—and how these gave shape to the written records now left to be studied. As Sahlin (1995) and numerous others have shown, ideas of what constitutes “history” may vary considerably from culture to culture, where they may be shaped by fundamental differences in temporal structures, language, and cosmology. In this perspective, history is interwoven with innumerable other factors that define the way a particular culture views itself and its proper place in the surrounding world. Maya notions of history, not surprisingly, are bound to differ from our own ideas of what constitutes “the past” (Lowenthal 1985). Even so, we still lack much understanding of how Maya culture in the Classic period framed its textual representations of earlier people, events, and social

relations. This chapter is hardly so ambitious, for it focuses only on a few important inscriptions at one of many Maya sites with a vibrant tradition of written history. Yet, through these, we can approach general questions of how Maya notions of the past were culturally construed. Such a detailed treatment of a single tradition will, we hope, illuminate some general issues concerning the ways Maya dynasts of the Classic period chose (or chose not) to represent themselves and their forebears.

This chapter focuses on one temple at Copan where the inscriptions and ornate decoration embody and convey history as no other Maya monument does. This is Structure 10L-26, the temple of the Hieroglyphic Stairway, a pyramid once dominating the north side of the main Acropolis (figure 10.1). As is well known, Structure 10L-26's stairway bears the longest extant Maya inscription and presents a remarkable overview of local dynastic history. The dates and events recorded on this massive document were not randomly constructed, of course, but rather served as background for a single event that, as we shall see, motivated the dedication of the stairway itself—the burial of Ruler 12 within its substructure. Another key inscription from Structure 10L-26 is the so-called “Temple Inscription,” from the building's upper temple, recently reconstructed in an almost complete form from its earlier jumbled state. This text is also unique in many ways and offers a strange twist on the historical themes presented in the stairway.

Before delving into these monuments, however, it is first necessary to present the fundamentals of Copan's dynastic history as presently known, updating some earlier discussions by me and by others (W. Fash 1991; Martin and Grube 2000; Stuart 1992). The issues raised touch on historiography, archaeology, and iconography, but at the center of this treatment is Copan's idiosyncratic documentary record. Copan's local style of monumental writing emphasizes or ignores certain topics and themes that are treated differently elsewhere. These patterns offer a unique means to explore the concerns and activities of royal court society in the Classic period. Specifically, while historical information is of supreme intrinsic interest, the ancient textual and symbolic patterning of that history illuminates how Copan positioned itself and its own identity in the Maya and Mesoamerican world. Structure 10L-26's display of names and events is obviously anchored in Copan's own histori-

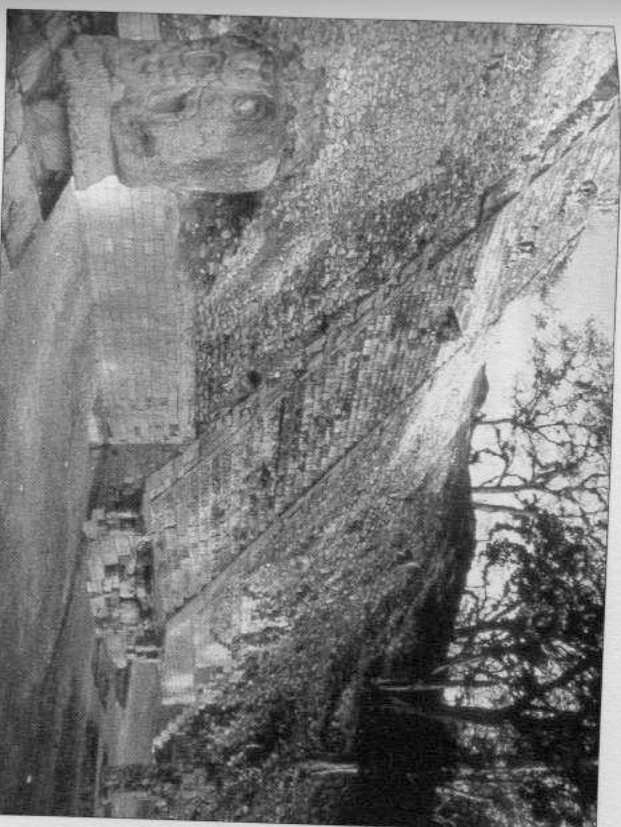


FIGURE 10.1

Structure 10L-26 in 1987. (Photograph by the author)

cal circumstances, but the ordering and visual presentation of such written information reveal much about Maya notions of the past and ancestral remembrance.

Historical events are obviously a major emphasis in Mesoamerican texts, yet some Maya sites emphasize historical subjects and narratives more than others. As it happens, Copan generally seems “ahistorical” when compared with Palenque or Yaxchilan, for example (Stuart 1992). The stelae and altars of the Acropolis seem little more than ritual markers bearing the names of various kings, and the details of Copan's political history are frustratingly absent for the most part. The Hieroglyphic Stairway, by contrast, is not only immensely long, but also vast in its narrative scope, encompassing mythological events and centuries of royal history. It must have been remarkably novel in its time, even from the perspective of kingdoms where records of historical details were more firmly rooted as textual genres. Few, if any, other Maya inscriptions even attempted to present their contents on a comparable public scale.¹

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE HIEROGLYPHIC STAIRWAY

Copan's Classic-period dynasty of sixteen rulers spanned a period of nearly four centuries, and the basic outline of the royal history is today well understood (Marin and Grube 2000; Newsome 2001; Schele and Freidel 1990:306–345; Stuart 1992, 1997, 2004). As background, here I offer the barest sketch of the dynastic history relevant to the interpretations of the stairway, focusing mainly on four kings: K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' (Ruler 1), Ruler 12, Waxaklajun Ub'ah K'awil (Ruler 13), and K'ahk' Yipyaj Chan K'awil (Ruler 15).²

Copan's so-called founder was the now famous K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo', first identified as an Early Classic ruler by the author in 1984. He is, of course, the first of the seated figures depicted in the sequence of sixteen kings on the periphery of Altar Q. According to the text on the upper face of the stone, he "arrived" at Copan from some foreign locale in the year A.D. 427, approximately five months after receiving the charter of royal office at his point of origin. His outsider status seems to be emphasized by the Teotihuacan-style elements that are routinely part of his costume in Late Classic depictions. For this reason, he is often assumed to be a native of highland Mexico or perhaps Kaminaljuyu (Coggin 1988). Despite the suggestive evidence, there is probably no need to go so far to explain his origins. The name K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' is decidedly Mayan (Great Sun Green Quetzal Macaw), and his nearest contemporary portrait shows the early king in pure Maya regalia; only in his later portraits is this ethnic difference emphasized. The evidence suggests that he was ethnically Maya, and the study of his likely remains in the Humal tomb further suggests that he spent most of his early years in the central lowlands (Sharer et al., chapter 5 in this volume). No textual data resolve the issue, but there is good reason to believe that his connections to Teotihuacan were real and lasting enough to be remembered by later dynasts at Copan. I believe that the main political event commemorated in Altar Q's text could have involved a visit to the highland city by the Maya nobleman then named K'uk' Mo' Ajaw, who three days later departed for the lowlands with his newfound emblems of royal office (Stuart 2004). This scenario necessitates a view of Teotihuacan as a pancultural pilgrimage center associated with the sacred charter of rulership, much as it remained

throughout later stages of Mesoamerican history. As we will see, the preoccupation with a Teotihuacan "heritage" would dominate the symbolism of Copan's Late Classic political art.

K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' is intimately tied to the so-called "founder's glyph" first discussed by Schele (1992a). This distinctive-looking sign combination always ends in the sign -NAAH (house), suggesting that it is the name of a particular type of house or structure. As I have discussed elsewhere (Stuart 2000, 2004), the full reading is perhaps *wi'e-naah* (origin house), which, in its many examples, seems strongly linked to Teotihuacan symbolism. The same building term is cited in several inscriptions at other sites (Yaxchilan and Machaquila, among others) and may refer to a ritual locale at Teotihuacan. Its prominence in the inscription atop Altar Q suggests that nearby Structure 10L-16, with its clear Teotihuacan symbolism, may have been a local Copan version of an origin house.

K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo's establishment of a new dynastic order at Copan represented the foundation of the community as a major Classic center, although there are clear indications that Copan already had a long political history before this time (Stuart 2004). His arrival probably was timed to coincide roughly with the change of the *b'ak'tun* in A.D. 435 (9.0.0.0), recorded in several later Copan texts as being of profound historical importance. His son was a significant participant in the rituals centered on this calendrical station, and the double portrait of father and son on the circular Motmot marker may indicate that both were living witnesses to the event. The *b'ak'tun* ending was the probable date for the major construction of the early Motmot phase of Structure 10L-26, which we will prove significant to the interpretation of the texts and array of iconography in the building's final phase.

Here, we will not discuss most of the early rulers who succeeded Ruler 2, because the history surrounding them is so poorly known, except for a few dates and architectural developments around the site core. Ruler 8 seems to have been a major figure responsible for the construction of the magnificent Rosalila structure, probably around A.D. 540. This temple, at the core of the Acropolis, was clearly designed as the ritual center for the ancestral cult of the initial dynast, K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo', whose name is emblematically repeated on its outer walls. It is interesting to see that this temple, devoted to the founder,

contains none of the visual allusions to central Mexico that became important much later in Copan's artistic history.

The next ruler who plays a significant role in the architectural history of Structure 10L-26 is the twelfth of the sequence, sometimes known in the literature as "Smoke Imix" (an unfortunate nickname that has no relationship to the king's true name). In many ways, he was the most powerful and influential of Copan's sixteen kings. He assumed the throne on February 8, 628, either as a child or a very young man, and reigned sixty-seven years. Interestingly, during the early seventh century, several long-lived and important rulers held sway over other Maya kingdoms, among them K'inich Janab' Pakal of Palenque and Ixannah B'ahlam I of Yaxchilan. Together, these and other lords gave shape to the political landscape that would dominate Classic Maya history for the next two centuries, before the collapse. At Copan, Ruler 12 appears to have consolidated political control and wielded it over a considerable distance from the Copan Valley. One of the more distinctive features of his rule was the erection of several inscribed monuments around the perimeter of the valley itself, on mountainsides away from standing architecture. These monuments likely held cosmological significance associated with the world directions and possibly commemorated royal rituals held near important mountain-top shrines that have long since vanished. Nonetheless, they reveal that Ruler 12 constructed monuments beyond Copan's Acropolis and its immediate area. Within the Acropolis area itself, Ruler 12 constructed several more stelae and altars and, no doubt, helped to give shape to much of the Acropolis architecture as we know it. At about this time, as well, we find an inscription naming Ruler 12 at Quirigua, perhaps suggesting that Copan in these years was politically dominant over its much smaller neighbor. This possibility will emerge as very significant in the consideration of the next king. After nearly seventy years on the throne, Ruler 12 died on July 2, 695, and was buried in a large tomb discovered in 1988 deep within Structure 10L-26 (W. Fash, Beaubien, et al. 2001; W. Fash, Williamson, et al. 1992). The presence of the royal tomb at this location led directly to the conception and design of the Hieroglyphic Stairway and all subsequent modifications of the pyramid.

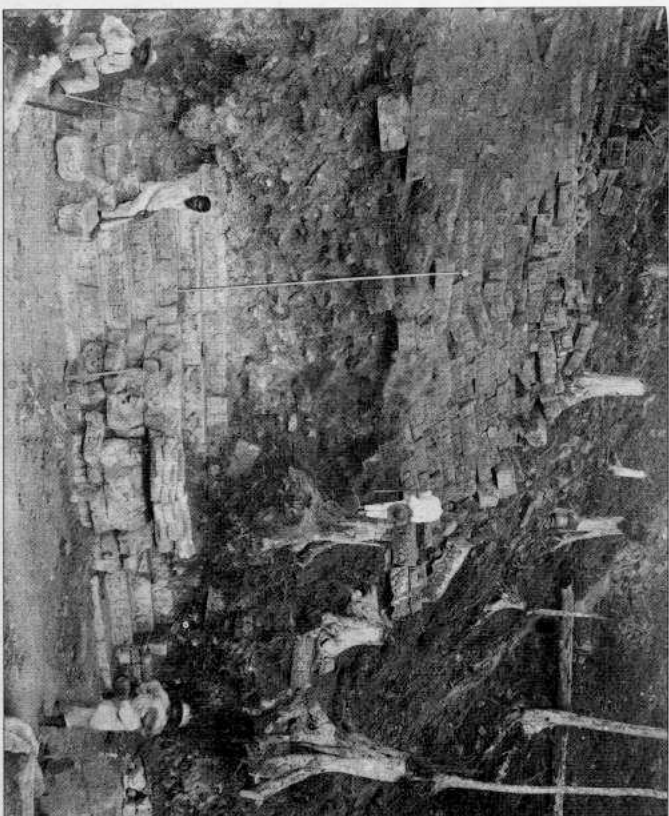


FIGURE 10.2

Photograph of 1895 excavations at Structure 10L-26, showing the upper stumped steps above the section discovered in situ. (Photograph courtesy the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University)

LOOKING AT TWO PHASES OF THE HIEROGLYPHIC STAIRWAY

The probable son of the long-lived Ruler 12 was the thirteenth ruler, Waxaklajun Ub'iah K'awil. His ample modifications to the Great Plaza, with the dedications of the principal stelae (Newsome 2001), gave the northern area of the Acropolis much of its current form. One of his principal architectural accomplishments was the amplification of the Structure 10L-26 pyramid above the tomb of his father, corresponding to what has come to be known as the "Esmeralda" phase of the building (W. Fash 2002). The Hieroglyphic Stairway now seems to have been a part of this refurbishment, but the construction history of the building and its inscribed steps is exceedingly complex. To

untangle the evidence, we must rely on a mutually informed consideration of both the textual and stratigraphic records.

The stairway is badly weathered in many areas, and only about one-third was found in its original place, the upper two-thirds having tumbled from place at some point in antiquity. When excavated by Owens and Gordon (Gordon 1902), a large section from the upper stairway was discovered to have slumped down the pyramid, luckily retaining much of its original order (figure 10.2). Nonetheless, a complete restoration of the stairway has proved impossible because of many very eroded blocks. What remains are several historical dates relating the accession and death of various rulers, as well as a few obscure yet tantalizing "floating" sections that are out of context and thus defy any meaningful translation.

Archaeologists at Copan have long assumed that the stairway was a single-phase enterprise conceived and produced under the reign of Ruler 15. There is now good reason to revise this view, at least somewhat. As seen in its present reconstructed form (dating to 1939), the inscription on the stairway appears to be one long text without breaks or interruptions. The carving styles of the glyphs and the information contained within the hieroglyphs suggest, however, that the stairway was constructed in two parts and at two different times, with the final monument consisting of separate but thematically linked inscriptions. The best evidence for this is the presence of two dedication events in the stairway inscription, one associated with the date 9.13.18.17.9 (A.D. 710) recorded on Step 1 and another with 9.16.4.1.0 (A.D. 755).³ Significantly, both dedicatory passages (figure 10.3a, b) make use of the verb *pat-wan* (to build, shape, form) (Stuart 1998), clearly indicating that two stairways were built over a five-decade period.

These two parts of the stairway can be easily recognized by looking at the carving styles of the glyphs. The lowermost section, fourteen steps of which were discovered by Owens and Gordon *in situ*, is carved with relatively small glyphs in an ornate style, using sharp contours and fine, incised lines. These are similar to the glyphs found on the sides of Stela C in the main plaza, dating to 9.14.0.0.6 Ajaw 13 Muwan.⁴ Some fallen glyphs from the stairway display the same size and carving style and, presumably, were set originally near the lower part that is still in place. A very different treatment of carving is visible on the numerous

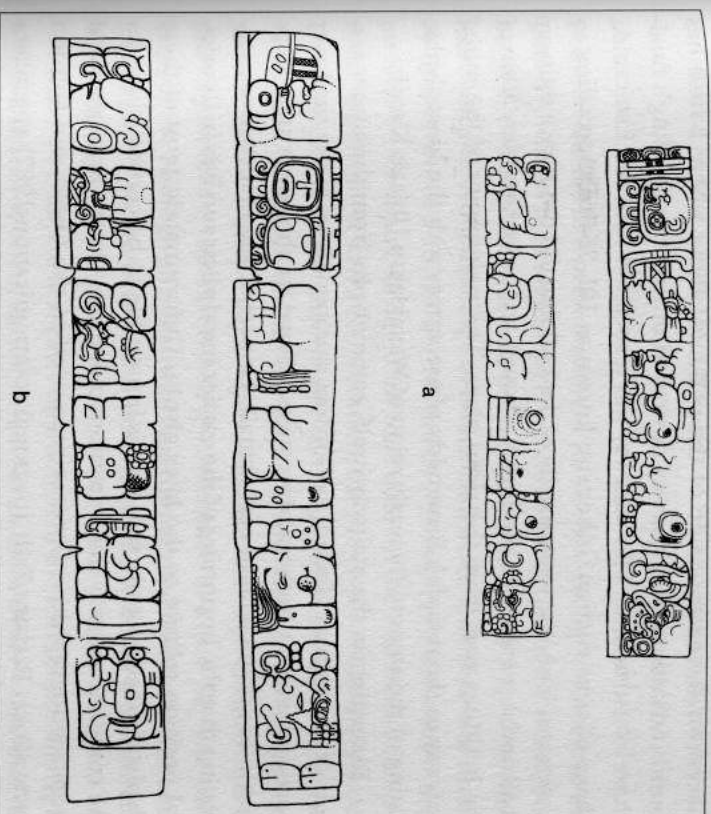


FIGURE 10.3

Dedicatory statements from the Hieroglyphic Stairway: (a) Step 1 and (b) Step 38.

(Drawings by the author, based on preliminary drawings by B. Fash)

remaining blocks from the upper stairway. The glyphs are larger in size and show much rounder, balloon-like contours that are most similar to the glyphs on Stela M, placed directly in front of the stairway and dating to 9.16.5.0.0. The similar styles of Stelae C and M correspond very well to the two dedicatory dates of the inscription.⁵

The Hieroglyphic Stairway, I therefore posit, is really composed of two distinct stairways: the original, in the reign of Waxaklajun Ub'ah K'awil, and the later, upper section, added by Ruler 15 well into his own reign. If the stairway in its present form (more or less) was the result of a modification by Ruler 15, what would the original setting of the earlier stairway have been? Armed with this epigraphic evidence, W. Fash (2002) suggests, based on the architectural investigations of Rudy Larios and Fernando López, that the earliest version was originally

placed on the eastern side of the pyramid, above where Larios has found indications of a stairway destroyed during the building's final-phase construction. This stairway was associated with the Esmeralda phase of construction, otherwise known as 10L-26-3rd. According to Larios and Fash, the western side of the building did not have a stairway at all and represented a significant, though temporary, reorientation of the building away from the main plaza. The assignment of the initial stairway to the temple's Esmeralda phase agrees with the hieroglyphic dating of the steps to the early reign of Waxaklajun Ub'ah K'awil.

Returning to the stairway itself, some glyphs from the upper section of the stairway (found, by Gordon, slumped down above the lower portion) exhibit both carving styles.⁶ Some of the lowermost steps within the fallen section may actually be part of the first stairway, suggesting that the beginning of the earlier inscription survives in its original position relative to the later glyphs. Unfortunately, most of these glyphs are badly weathered, so it is impossible to be certain where on the complete stairway this transition took place. On the basis of several large iconographic sculptures recovered in the Owen and Gordon excavations, Barbara Fash (personal communication 1987) speculates that a decorated outset platform similar to that on Structure 10L-11 may have been built in the upper or middle reaches of the entire stairway. Such a platform would have had the practical function of allowing Ruler 15's section of the stairway to be read easily, from the plaza floor, this would surely have been impossible.

The narrative structure of the stairway's two inscriptions is now easier to comprehend, for we are no longer forced to explain why the dedication of another, earlier stairway would be the final climactic event of one very long inscription. In its original form, this first stairway contained a record of the early kings of Copan, listing their accession and death dates. This is indicated by the bottom-most steps discovered in place by Gordon and inscribed with the following dates:

9.5.19.3.0	8 Ajaw 3 Soz'	Accession of Ruler 10
9.7.4.17.4	10 K'an 2 Keh	Death of Ruler 10
9.7.5.0.8	Lamat 6 Mak	Accession of Ruler 11

9.9.14.16.9	2 Muluk 2 K'ayab'	Death of Ruler 11
9.9.14.17.5	6 Chikchan 18 K'ayab'	Accession of Ruler 12

Between the list-like presentation of these royal inaugurations and the final dedication phrase is a lengthy, though badly damaged, passage on Steps 4, 5, and 6 that records the death and burial of Ruler 12. After this comes an eroded passage of noncalendrical glyphs, followed finally by the record of 9.13.18.17.9 12 Muluk 7 Muwan, the dedication date on Step 1 (see figure 10.3a). This final date on the bottommost step is more specifically a stairway dedication, for the glyph *ye-b'u-li*, for *y-ehb-il* (his steps), is clearly discernible in the penultimate block. The full dedication passage in the last two glyphs of the bottom step can be read *pat-wan y-ehb-il u-muk-il* 'Copan'-*q'ajaw* (built are the steps of the burial of the Copan lord), this surely being a reference to Ruler 12. The final steps of the Hieroglyphic Stairway thus connect the monument directly and explicitly to the deceased Ruler 12, stating that it is a monument "of his burial."

Ruler 10 is the earliest ruler mentioned in the section remaining in situ, but blocks of other, earlier Initial Series dates clearly show that the timeline of the dynastic narrative extended much further back in time. From the various scattered fragments, it is now possible to reconstruct a selection of dates, including the accessions of Rulers 8 (9.4.18.6.12) and 9 (9.5.17.13.7), although their original placement above Step 14 is impossible to determine. A long section of text runs along several steps above the accession record of Ruler 10, and we can only presume that this pertained to some historical events from Ruler 9's reign.

One newly reconstructed step commemorates the accession of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo', recording the 8.19.10.10.17 date famous from Altar Q, but in Initial Series form (figure 10.4). A number of blocks from this vitally important inscription have yet to be joined, but the surviving portions suggest that they relate significantly more information on Copan's dynastic founding than Altar Q. Presumably, this accession date for the first king came near the beginning of the stairway's earliest phase, wherever that originally was.

The slumped portion of the stairway excavated by Gordon and kept in its original order includes the possible transition point between

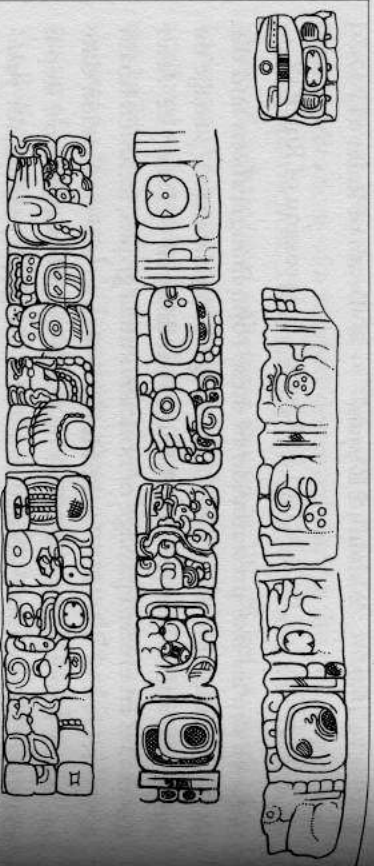


FIGURE 10.4

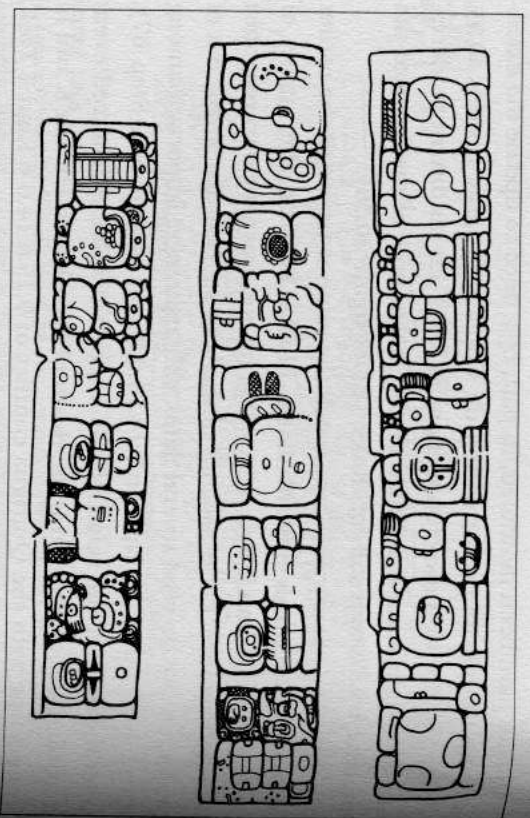
The accession record of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo', assembled from various loose blocks of the Hieroglyphic Stairway. (Drawing by the author, based on preliminary drawings by B. Fast)

the smaller, finely carved glyphs of the lower steps and the larger, balloon glyphs of the upper portion. This "seam" comes between what are now Steps 33 and 34, where the transition is visible not only in the sculptural style of glyphs, but also in the size of the stone construction blocks, as already noted. In this section, then, we may have the initial steps of the lower section in order, in a section that preceded the accession reference to K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo'. Sadly, most of this is eroded beyond hope of legibility, but one intriguing passage includes a lengthy Long Count date using periods far higher than the b'ak'tun, rather like other "Grand Long Counts" at Coba and Yaxchilan. This mythical date, far in the past, seems to be connected with temple dedications overseen by certain gods. At least five such "god houses" are named in this enigmatic section, and I believe that they pertain to a previously unknown aspect of Classic Maya creation mythology.

Great pains were evidently taken by Ruler 15 to ensure that the second stage of the Hieroglyphic Stairway, with its associated decorative and iconographic sculpture, would conform to the earlier steps. In the forty-seven years after the first steps were dedicated, Copan experienced severe political and military misfortunes as a result of Waxaklajun Ub'aah K'awil's capture and defeat by Quiriguá in A.D. 738. By appending his own staircase to the earlier monument, Ruler 15

seems to have been motivated, in part, by a need to update the extensive and important information on Copan's dynastic history. In so doing, he drew his own connections to Ruler 12, his distant predecessor. It is significant that Ruler 15 also makes note of the fact that the modified stairway is still "of" Ruler 12 (see figure 10.3b).

Ruler 15's stairway follows much the same structure as the earlier section. Numerous unarticulated blocks bearing the name of Waxaklajun Ub'aah K'awil suggest that he, too, was a major protagonist of that narrative. Large sections of the later stairway are largely out of order, but we do read several dates with assurance. Important among these is 11 Ajaw 18 Zak, or 9.14.15.0.0 (on what is now Step 67), another date in the reign of this important ruler. A featured event recorded soon afterward is the death of Waxaklajun Ub'aah K'awil in connection with the Quiriguá conflict of 9.15.6.14.6 Kimi 4 Tzek, followed, in turn, by a long passage explaining its significance from the Copan viewpoint (figure 10.5). The initial statement on the Quiriguá-Copan war is surprisingly nonbellicose: *syuj Yaxhaal Chaak* (Yaxhaal Chaak was born). Yaxhaal Chaak is an important aspect of the Maya storm god whose name literally means "First-Rain Chaak," and he is occasionally depicted on painted vessels from the central Petén region. The 6 Kimi 4 Tzek date of the war corresponds to May 3, A.D. 738, the very day that is widely celebrated throughout the Maya area as the Day of the Cross and is heralded as the official start of the rainy season. This passage clearly is used to establish the timing for the important episode, and one wonders whether the timing of the conflict was directly related to this day of profound agricultural and ritual importance. Later in the same section of the stairway, we read *h'a'ay u-²-sak-ik-il hu-tok' tu-pakal* (his [?] breath expired in war). This casts the defeat in a somewhat nobler light than the texts of Quiriguá, which state that the Copan ruler "was chopped," or beheaded (Stuart 1992).⁷ I suspect that many of the loose blocks in a similar carving style went with this passage, discussing in some detail that fateful event. The upper-stairway inscription goes on to record the accession date of Ruler 14, his death nine years later, and then the accession of Ruler 15. Significantly, the last readable date of this upper portion of the stairway commemorates the making of "Ruler 12's" stairway on 9.16.4.1.0, the last date of the entire Hieroglyphic Stairway inscription. Although the beginning of

**FIGURE 10.5**

Sections of the Hieroglyphic Stairway recording the war with Quirigua. (Drawings by the author, based on preliminary drawings by B. Fash)

this later section of the stairway text is missing, one can see that its internal structure is very much the same: a series of historical records featuring royal accession and death dates, culminating in a highlighted statement of a stairway being built and dedicated.

Both texts on the stairway seem self-contained and essentially conceived as two separate, though complementary, inscriptions. Their respective historical contents do not overlap, yet they conform to a similar discursive pattern. Moreover, the chronology of the upper section begins, as far as one can tell, within the reign of Waxaklajun Ub'iah K'awil, who, presumably, presided over the stairway dedication mentioned at the end of the lower section. The stylistic differences between the two text fragments, as I have described them, co-vary with the content: the sharper, more deeply carved glyphs of the bottom steps discuss the earliest kings, and the rounder carving of the other section seems restricted completely to a discussion of the history between the time of Waxaklajun Ub'iah K'awil and the second recorded dedication under Ruler 15.

The later king's modification of the original stairway confirms the

powerful significance of the original stairway inscription, implying that the latter must have been considered, in some manner, the "official history" of the site and its long-lived dynasty. His refurbishment of Structure 10L-26 may even reveal Ruler 15's desire to best his predecessor, for in his text, he summarizes forty years of history in the same amount of space Waxaklajun Ub'iah K'awil used to recount the preceding three centuries. Then again, we must remember that the point of these texts is not necessarily self-aggrandizement. The focal point of the narrative, when all is said and done, is Ruler 12, arguably the greatest king in Copan's history.

THE TEMPLE INSCRIPTION

The vaulted temple atop Structure 10L-26, associated with the final phase of the pyramid, was largely gone when first investigated by Maudslay. A large array of sculptured stone from its outer façade (B. Fash 1992a:figure 16) and interior is the only indication of its former grandeur, and determining even its precise dimensions is difficult today. The temple's outer decoration emphasized an explicitly militaristic, Teotihuacan-like iconography, whereas the interior design was confined to an ornate, full-figure inscription adorning one of the long interior walls. This "Temple Inscription," as it is generally called, is surprisingly complete, given the temple's complete collapse. In 1996 Barbara Fash and I oversaw its reconstruction in Copan's Museo de Escultura, where it is now on display. The long, horizontal band of glyphs is partly carved on beveled stones, indicating that it decorated the vault spring of the temple interior. Curtain holes are evenly spaced among these glyphs, indicating that it was placed above very large and shallow "niches" that probably held some sort of image. The remaining sections form two well-finished, vertical edges of what was in all likelihood the same niche or door.

The text is one of the finest examples of scribal art from Mesoamerica and perhaps one of the most intriguing inscriptions yet discovered in the Maya area. Close inspection of the glyphs reveals that many are adorned with "Teotihuacan" visual elements, as if they were designed to conform to the temple's overall concern with central Mexico and the messages conveyed by its visual style. Some of the signs are, indeed, completely unrecognizable as Maya glyphs proper, but

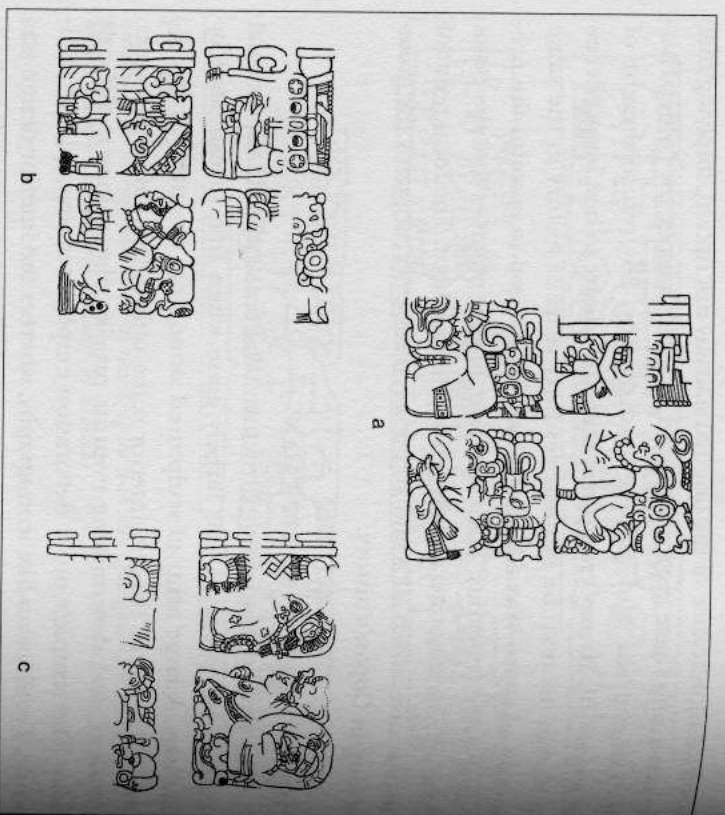


FIGURE 10.6

Three parallel passages in the Temple Inscription of Structure 10L-26. (Drawings by the author)

others are clearly Maya signs with Teotihuacan-style elements attached. In all respects, these hybrid glyphs are unique in the corpus of Maya inscriptions.

The Teotihuacan-style glyphs and those of a more conventional Maya form are of equal number and were placed in alternating columns. On the two flanking sections that bear double columns, the leftmost column only was composed of the odd Teotihuacan-style elements; those to the right were conventional-looking, albeit elaborate, Maya glyphs. At first glance, it would seem that the text is composed in a conventional format of double columns, reading two glyphs across, then down, and so on, but this is not the case. Instead, the inscription is read in vertical columns and has two parallel components, one "Teotihuacan" and one Maya. That is, like the Rosetta Stone, the

inscription presents a single text written in two very different-looking scripts.

Comparisons of paired glyphs within the inscription show this remarkable format (figure 10.6a–c). Column pE in the horizontal band shows two "Teotihuacan" glyphs, the first composed of the number 18 and a small Tlaloc and the second showing hybrid figure-combining features of Tlaloc and K'awil (God K). Column pF, immediately to the right, displays two standard Maya glyphs: a full-figure number "18" (showing the personalized variants of 8 and 10) and, below, a B'AAH gopher with K'AWIL. Obviously, the two glyphs of column pF render the name of Waxaklajun Ub'iah K'awil. In another comparison (figure 10.6b), column pI shows a frontal-view Tlaloc with a numerical coefficient of 2 above a second glyph representing a seated man with a staff and a coefficient of 11. The column to the right, pJ, displays the Maya head variant of 2 above a "K'atun" glyph, and below, a clearly recognizable, full-figure version 11-HAAB' ("11 Tuns"). Evidently, the frontal-view Tlaloc functions as an equivalent to "K'atun," and the seated person with the staff serves as a parallel to "Tun." In column pK (figure 10.6c), the combination of the full-figure "8" and a goggled-eyed character seems to be a rendering of the "8 Ajaw" day sign in pL. Similarly, in pM, an "8" attached to some odd-looking creature appears to parallel "8 Soz'" in the neighboring column to its right.

A similar pattern holds for most of the glyphs in the Temple Inscription, although perhaps not so obviously in all cases. In column pG, for example, two "Teotihuacan" glyphs seem to have no clear relationship to the name of Ruler 14 that appears at their side in column pH. Despite some ambiguous pairings, however, there can be little doubt that the Temple Inscription employs two parallel texts, one in a Teotihuacan style, apparently to be read first, and a "translation" in standard Maya. Despite some initial hopes, the odd glyphs do not reproduce any true writing system from highland Mexico, and they now seem quite different from the elements of writing now known from the Teotihuacan tradition (Taube 2000). Because of the text's overall affinities to Maya conventions, one might consider the "Teotihuacan" glyphs as no more than an elaborate typeface or "font" that was deemed visually and thematically appropriate to the temple and its Teotihuacan flavor.

The content of the Temple Inscription is difficult to discern. The vertical section that was positioned originally to the left of the niche or door of the temple has a date of 5 ? 4 K'ayab', followed by the verb *pat-wan* (it is built). This date is almost certainly 9.13.14.0.1 5 Imix 4 K'ayab', which falls in the reign of Waxaklajun Ub'aah K'awil and, oddly enough, predates the dedication date of the earlier Hieroglyphic Stairway. Presumably, this refers to the construction of an earlier phase of Structure 10L-26, possibly an earlier ancestral shrine built above Ruler 12's tomb. The last glyph of these columns is *u-kab'-i-yi* (he oversaw it), suggesting that the text continues up to the horizontal band, but which glyph comes next is, again, hard to determine. The long, horizontal sequence of reconstructable glyphs includes the names of Waxaklajun Ub'aah K'awil and Ruler 14, as well as a distance number (2.11.0.0) that connects to the Period Ending 9.16.5.0.0. The event associated with this Period Ending is written *och-k'-ahk'* (fire-entering), a standard architectural dedicatory rite that surely corresponds to the construction and ritual activation of Structure 10L-26's upper temple. The text continues down the right-hand vertical columns with the name of Ruler 12, probably naming him as the "owner" of the ancestral shrine.

As noted, the "Teotihuacan" glyphs of the Temple Inscription do not represent any true script tradition from Mesoamerica but instead appear to have been invented by a remarkably creative local scribe for this one text and temple. Their appearance is strange to us, no doubt, and I think that a similar response was probably the intended effect on ancient audiences allowed into the temple. But why construct a "false" text here within the temple and not in the outer inscriptions of the Hieroglyphic Stairway, which are all presented in standard legible format? This is a difficult question to answer, but I suspect that the highly restricted use of the interior temple space might go a little toward explaining the esoteric and purposefully obscure style. Perhaps a conventional Maya inscription would have seemed out of place within the confines of a small temple so heavily adorned with the visual elements of Teotihuacan. By contrast, the Hieroglyphic Stairway, in its earlier and later phases, presented a legible history designed to be read and absorbed within a public setting. Inside the upper temple, the written message was obscured by an overarching concern with a style that evoked another place and time.

TEOTIHUACAN AND THE IDEA OF THE PAST

The question now to be asked is, Why would a funerary monument devoted to a recently deceased king—the father of the first builder, in fact—call on the symbols of a distant and probably "dead" Mesoamerican culture? For the Maya of Copan, what profound meanings surrounding Teotihuacan called for its symbolism to dominate some of the kingdom's most imposing architectural monuments? An obvious comparison is to be drawn between the similar decorative schemes of Structures 10L-26 and 10L-16. Structure 10L-16 is the tallest building of the Main Group and is centrally located over the probable tomb of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo'. It was evidently a dynastic shrine devoted to the founder, and his name glyph and image are continuously cited in the architectural decor. The complex iconographic program of that temple's final phase was perhaps even more explicitly evocative of Teotihuacan symbolism than Structure 10L-26 (W. Fash and B. Fash 2000:figure 14.7). Given the placement of Altar Q at the base of its stairway, there also exists the intriguing possibility that Structure 10L-16 was a local Maya model of the *wile'naah* (origin house) cited so prominently in the altar's text as the place of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo's accession. Structure 10L-16 is unquestionably the founder's personal shrine, and the strong Teotihuacan imagery seems perfectly in keeping with the wider pattern we find in Copan's Late Classic iconography and writing.

The similarities to Structure 10L-26 are obvious in many ways, but there is one key and revealing difference between the buildings. Structure 10L-26 does not feature K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' in any special way; he is simply one of the many dynasts recorded in the history of the steps. Rather, it is Ruler 12 who is the personal focus of the written history of both the stairway and the Temple Inscription. He remains the protagonist of the temple through two major renovations over a period of five decades. The two pyramids can be seen as different ancestral shrines focused on the most notable and prominent kings of Copan history. Yet, it is curious that both temples should so strongly evoke a distant time and place. The particularly strong Teotihuacan associations of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' in Copan's art have already been noted by many writers (Coggins 1988; W. Fash and B. Fash 2000; Stuart 2000), but Ruler 12 is seldom, if ever, shown in such obviously foreign clothing

(Stela 6 may be an exception). Yet, it seems quite evident that the founder was not the sole possessor of a highland style in Copan's art.

The explanation of highland iconography on Ruler 12's great temple lies, I believe, in Maya concepts of time's passage, particularly through representations of dynastic origins that are distantly removed from the viewer in both space and time. By the seventh century, Teotihuacan's style was the visual code of a deceased culture, but its powerful message of political authority seems to have remained strong in Mesoamerica for centuries to come (Carrasco, Jones, and Sessions 2000). Even beyond Copan, artists used elements of Teotihuacan costume and ritual to provide the sense of a remote past to their own political history. Retrospective scenes of Early Classic kings at Piedras Negras and Palenque, for example, depict them as warriors in Teotihuacan costume (Stuart 2000), but it is difficult to draw direct connections between highland Mexico and those particular historical figures. In addition to age, the foreign insignia at these other sites also conveyed a sense of ethnic and social distance, as Stone (1989) has noted in a key study of Teotihuacan symbolism in Classic Maya art. As I have argued elsewhere (Stuart 2000), the significance of central Mexican imagery in the Maya area foreshadows the meanings surrounding Tollan, the "Place of Catapults," so often cited as a mythic place of political and ethnic origin among Mesoamerican elites during the post-Classic.

We might draw upon powerful parallels within European history, wherein Classical centers of ancient political and cultural authority were used since the Renaissance as sources for the basic symbolic vocabulary of law, politics, and civilization (Lowenthal 1985). Teotihuacan seems a place with similar "Classical" presence among the later Maya, who chose to adopt elements of its iconography for use in certain settings, and only on the heels of Teotihuacan's own demise during the sixth century. This was no late and desperate attempt to construct a "false" political heritage, however. Many years of Copan archaeology make it abundantly clear that the evocation of Teotihuacan on Structure 10L-26 was grounded in historical reality, specifically, in K'inch Yax K'uk' Mo's own intimate and direct connection with Teotihuacan in the fifth century. Although the founder is not featured heavily in the texts and symbolism of Structure 10L-26, his mark on the

temple's design is present, providing the underlying connection to the political and religious symbols of central Mexico.

Structure 10L-26 signals a profound change in Copan's royal ancestral cult, which had for so long focused (it seems) on K'inch Yax K'uk' Mo'. The founder's own major shrine was the Rosalila structure (and later phases of Structure 10L-16), probably dedicated by Ruler 8 around A.D. 540 and long the dominating temple of Copan's Acropolis. After a long series of relatively short-lived kings during the sixth and seventh century, Ruler 12's lengthy reign of sixty-seven years must have been a transforming experience for both the fortunes of the polity and the local institutions of rulership. The king's long-felt impact may be signaled on the side of Altar Q, where his portrait is shown sitting, rather than sitting atop the glyph for "5 K'atuns." All the other kings are on their personal name glyphs (with the significant exception of the founder—again, the two kings are treated similarly). Arguably, Copan's "Classic" period began with Ruler 12. With the building of Structure 10L-26 by Rulers 13 and 15, we see him celebrated in an elaborate and permanent expansion of the royal ancestral cult. It seems appropriate, therefore, that the visual cues of royal ancestry and authority—the foreign iconography—might have carried over from earlier traditions that focused exclusively on the founding king. Ruler 12 became a new and probably refreshing focus of Copan's state religion, and his veneration may have served to dust off an aging local ideology. As Lowenthal notes (1985:373), the "empathetic identification with great precursors, like idealization and imitation, derived from the urge to reanimate the past in the present."

Notes

An initial draft of this paper was written in 1994 for the Copan advanced seminar at the School of American Research, Santa Fe, New Mexico. Throughout the lengthy time of this paper's evolution, I have benefited greatly from comments and feedback from all of the seminar's participants. Some of the more novel ideas put on paper in 1994, including my overview of Teotihuacan's role in Maya history at Tikal and Copan (Stuart 2000), have naturally made their way into other publications. I would particularly like to thank Barbara Fash for her unfailing energy in documenting and preserving the Hieroglyphic Stairway and for our many years of productive collaboration on studying Copan's art and writing.

1. Other very long historical texts include the Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque and the Temple of the Inscriptions at Tikal. The latter's roof-comb text perhaps offers the best comparison to the sheer physical scale of Copan's stairway. All these inscriptions are likewise large in their narrative scope.

2. These are, I think, reasonably accurate transliterations, but a simple number designation is provided when no complete reading of a name glyph is possible.

3. The first dedication date falls about five years into the reign of Waxaklajun Ub'iah K'awil. Until recently, it was presumed, by me and others (Schele and Larios 1991), to record the dedication of yet another stairway on an earlier, buried phase of 10L-26 (W. Fash, Williamson, et al. 1992). As later discussions will show, the two construction phases of the stairway are probably visible on the pyramid's exterior.

4. Gordon (1902:37) noted the chronological connection to Stela C a century ago: "It is not unlikely that when the dates of Stela C are understood, this monument will be found to belong to the same period as the Hieroglyphic Stairway. The two monuments have certain technical affinities in the carving, as though they might have been the work of the same master."

5. The stairway's earlier glyphs also correspond closely in style to several inscribed stone vessels (so-called *incensarios*) discovered in the outer fill of Structure 10L-26-1st and dated to the thirteenth *haab'* anniversary of Waxaklajun Ub'iah K'awil's inauguration, or 9.13.16.6.8.

6. Here, I refer to the two overall styles that correspond to the different construction episodes. Within these two phases, the stairway blocks were carved in several styles that are presently being studied in some detail with the hope that they will aid in the further refitting of the steps.

7. It is significant that the defeat is recorded so prominently at Copan twenty years after the fact, when there are no longer any indications that it was Quirigua's political subordinate. The lengthy notation of the Quirigua war on the Hieroglyphic Stairway contradicts Marcus's (1992b:360) assessment that military defeats were selectively omitted from Mesamerican native histories (see Nicholson [1971] for an opposing view from Aztec sources).